

ENQUIRY

*A Journal of Independent
Radical Thought*

POLITICAL LABOR AND THE STATIST TREND:

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An Editorial

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MR. LASKI WRITES AN EPITAPH

Not long ago, Harold J. Laski wrote a characteristically brilliant and widely publicised article called "Epitaph on a System." It appeared in the *New Statesman and Nation*, drew the editorial fire of the *New York Times*, and was proudly reprinted by the *New Republic*.

Laski's animus — and he does not speak for himself alone — is directed against those who are running this war. Churchill and his associates do not, it seems, understand what the war is about. For this is a revolutionary war, "in the essence a stage merely in an immense revolution in which the war of 1914, the Russian Revolution and the counter-revolutions on the Continent are earlier phases." Unaware of the revolutionary transition through which we are living, Mr. Churchill's government is holding fast to a dying economic order. And as a consequence of that, the existing rulers obstinately refuse to employ those revolutionary means which a revolutionary war demands. The defeats suffered by the British (he is especially concerned over the earlier struggle in Libya) have therefore served as an epitaph on the going system.

If Laski's remarks were meant to simply underline the fairly obvious fact that the potentialities of private capitalism are limited, or even exhausted, we might readily agree. If he and others who speak in the same terms were saying that this *ought to be* a revolutionary war, or, perhaps, that basic social changes, apart from political overturns, are characteristic of these years, there would be little room for criticism. But they are saying far more.

For we are told that the war is a revolution, that imperialism is doomed, that participation in the war effort is one of the chief avenues of struggle against the status quo. Hence the insistence that Churchill's methods cannot win the war. But such a viewpoint can be maintained, where it is not reduced to demagoguery, only under the cover of a studied ambiguity. This may be observed in the constant interweaving

of the war-goals of the liberals and the actual objectives of those who control the military apparatus. It is doubtlessly true that *if* this were a war for democracy, imperialist methods would be technologically incompetent; and *if* we could assume that the Allied leadership is interested in carrying on a struggle for freedom, then it would indeed make sense to offer constructive criticism as to how those ends might be more efficiently achieved.

It is a strange analysis of means and ends which will not test the ends of action by the means employed. The persistent confusion in the liberal mind may be traced to the fact that, substituting its own desires for the real goals of the military struggle, it finds it impossible to understand the gap between day-to-day events as they actually occur and as it would like them to be. Yet if, facing the facts, we recognize that imperialist ends require imperialist means and that imperialist means *define* imperialist ends, the problem becomes clarified at once.

A sober and intransigent idealism must recognize at last that the need is for political opposition, for a struggle against the very class, military and political structures which run the war and society itself. Laski brands himself a political prisoner of the regime in Britain when he pleads to Churchill that he "call the masses into partnership." This is the impotent, wailing cry of a man whose hands are bound. It is easy to see why the real revolution, the first blows of which have been struck in India, is only embarrassing to liberals and conservatives alike.

Mr. Laski's revolution is psychological *ersatz*. It is a futile attempt to bridge the gap between the need for a social overturn and the "practical" necessity of supporting those whose basic stake is in things as they are. Perhaps it is fitting that those who have so long sought to defend the bad against the worse should now see revolutionary visions in an imperialist war. Others, however, will know how to distinguish bread from a stone.

UNION STRUCTURE AND DEMOCRACY

by Harold Mitchell

In any examination of the varied approaches to the trade union problem, one common defect becomes immediately apparent: the one-sided or distorted perspective of almost every analyst. If a critical structural analysis is made, as by Michels,¹ all sense of historical dynamic is lost and the sociological and psychological data gradually hardens into a rigid schemata; if left wing thinkers make pregnant contributions to the study of the shifting character of trade unions under the pressure of social forces, they seem unable to escape a species of functional opportunism flowing from untenable psychological and sociological premises, the origins of which can be traced back to Marx and Engels. In the traditional liberal approach can be seen the worst features of both combined: politically static, psychologically naive. Liberals accept trade unions as a "good." This is an adequate summation of their general contribution to the problem.

It is not merely an academic question which is at stake. To take a stand today on trade union issues is not the relatively simple task that it once was; bewildering issues have arisen and the future will see some startling realignments. Unless there is an undistorted perspective, unless there is a clear vision of limited goals based on an awareness of structural possibilities, a correct approach to trade union problems will become increasingly difficult. An approach in these terms, even if tentative and groping should be of some value.

A brief review of some changes in the CIO,² a process which began before war started, is important, since they provided the catalyst for the mutations brought on by the war. The changes are the result of a reorientation in thinking on the part of the top clique of the CIO leadership (John L. Lewis excepted) best summarized in the study made by Golden and Ruttenberg, two top officials of the United Steelworkers of America.³

The book is on a very elementary level. Essentially it is a high pressure sales talk addressed to the masters of American industry. To overcome distrust of their product — the CIO — the authors attempt to show how the CIO has been changed from a militant organization of class struggle to a stable body of class collaboration. Gone or going are the militant leaders of yesterday, and in their place are suave diplomats amenable to friendly relations with the employers. The CIO on this new basis is ready to ensure "respon-

¹ Roberto Michels: *Political Parties*, Cosmopolitan Publishers, 1915.

² For purposes of analytical simplification and economy of space the AFL will be ignored. Nothing would be substantially altered by its inclusion.

³ Golden & Ruttenberg: *The Dynamics of Industrial Democracy*.

sible" union activity, that is, a cessation of all wild cat strikes and slow downs; it will refrain from all "unreasonable" demands and will submit all disputes to joint negotiating committees. In addition, CIO unions will cooperate in raising productivity and increasing efficiency. In return for these major concessions, the CIO asks for the following:

1. the closed shop or its equivalent
2. the check off system
3. the removal of die-hard anti-unionists from company personnel and the establishment of friendly negotiating committees

Boiled down, this means a deal to consolidate the position of the union bureaucrats at the expense of the membership. But it is not the employers who have accepted the offer. As a group they have remained adamant in their suspicious refusal (largely activated by their disbelief in the ability of the bureaucrats to fulfill their half of the bargain). It is the state, represented by the War Labor Board, which has accepted the reasoning of Golden and Rutenberg — accepted it with a special adaptation to the war.

The majority opinion in the Little Steel Case is especially instructive. Maintenance of union membership (in practice the equivalent of the closed shop) was approved as making for "... responsible union discipline, keeping faithfully the terms of the contract and provides a stable basis for union-management cooperation for more efficient production. If union leadership is responsive and cooperative, then irresponsible and uncooperative members cannot escape discipline." The check off was accepted as "saving the time of the union leaders for the settlement of grievances and the improvement of production."

In effect, the decision makes the union leader an unofficial representative of the government among the workers. His legitimate union responsibilities and duties are removed as hindering his governmental activities. Regardless of the general character of the closed shop and the check off (for me, the latter always represented a delegation of a legitimate union function to an improper, dangerous source), under the terms of this deal, they are regarded by government representatives and union bureaucrats alike, as important weapons *against* the union members. There is the implied threat that a "responsive and cooperative" union leadership will have the coercive power of the state to back it against any significant opposition, i. e. "irresponsible and uncooperative members."

The full import of these "new" concepts can hardly be realized today when all this is merely potential. Unions have not been broken to the point where the promises can be fulfilled by either side. But to see the present potential as a future reality one need merely analyze the history of the Russian and German trade union movements. To label the statist trend in trade unionism temporary war necessity,

when the dynamic force of social pressures is making these changes permanent features of societal structure all over the world, is an infantile liberal illusion.

Some Structural Aspects of Trade Unions

There is then the impact of an external social force (the war) upon a trade union movement at the very time of its entrance into a new phase of development. But it is in an examination of the internal structure — the functions, characteristics and composition of a union — that the inner drives of this development can be seen.

Trade unions are largely homogeneous organizations: for the most part, they are composed of industrial workers standing in a fixed position in our economic structure. As wage earners, they are divorced from all questions of policy and management; their thinking is forced into the narrowest of functional channels. This type of thinking, which has been highly developed in American industry, may be called functional rationalization⁴ and involves an organization of one's actions in such a way as to lead most efficiently to a previously defined goal, each element in this series of actions having a functional position and role. No higher type of thought need be hypothesized to account for the organization of trade unions. As long as a trade union remains on the level of direct-interest economic organization, each worker possesses keen enough intellectual weapons for an evaluation of the relative achievements of his union towards the goals he has set.

The unquestioning optimism of Karl Marx flowed in a large measure from his implicit assumption that this functional rationality was a sufficient guide to the working class in the struggle for socialism. Out of the inability of capitalism to satisfy the demands of the organized worker, Marx saw as an inexorable correlation — the development of socialist concepts among the workers. There are many of us who have tasted the bitter fruits of such simplistic optimism.

The opportunist willingness of the radical movement to utilize this functional social outlook of the working class, flows largely from an acceptance of this Marxian assumption. It shows itself sharply in all propaganda addressed to the working class. Pro-war forces attempt to use an idealistic appeal disgusting in its crudeness and barrenness. However, those left wing groups in substantial opposition to the war use weapons of a different kind. Their appeal is based on the narrow level of self interest. The cynical amorality prevalent in large sections of the working class is pampered and fed. Even if immediately effective in terms of securing militant working activity, it is completely insufficient and even dangerous in any broad perspective. A *socialist* revolution cannot be made with any such material. Functional rationalization must be enforced by substantial

⁴ This term is used, in another connection, in Karl Mannheim's *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction*.

rationalization, i.e. thinking based upon an intelligent insight upon the inter-relation of events. This in turn would involve a transformation in values: crude pragmatic concepts (largely developed by our own industrial set-up) must be replaced by an understanding of democratic practices, and ethical standards must permeate social life. Any revolutionary approach to trade union members must take these factors into consideration, if it is to have any permanent value.

Trade unions in the very struggle imposed upon them by their functional nature tend to develop the working class in diverse ways—often unconsciously. The development of more rounded personalities through cultural, sport and social activities, through the rational articulation of daily needs, the enhancement of human dignity through a new sense of strength and status and the social warmth of group protection have all been recognized as democratic, healthy by-products of union life.

The Democracy of Fitness

As long as a trade union maintains the integrity of its essential societal function, it must be an organization of direct struggle—that has always been clear to all those who understand the nature of capitalism. Such struggle must of necessity encourage and develop in each individual (the unit of action) at least the democracy of fitness. The shop steward best exemplifies this. His direct and immediate responsibility (and the sense of it) to his small group, the constantly converging pressures of worker, union official and boss mould the capable shop steward into a sensitive, alert leader with a distinct democratic approach to all problems. Naturally, this is an ideal picture, but despite any modification involved in the real, the very structure of relationship encourages this embryonic democracy.

The absorption of collective impulses and wishes by smaller units is essentially progressive in character. The potentially democratic role of the shop steward flows in a large measure from his microcosmic sphere of activity. Any attempt to work within trade unions should be grounded on the necessity for developing democratic roots in individual units. No sacrifice of this working concept should be made for any ephemeral (office) gains. This warning is clearly to be seen in the history of radical activity in the trade unions if the lesson of Michels is understood.

It might be said that many left-wingers have approached the trade unions with such democratic concern. What has almost always been the case has been an *incidental* concern with democracy. And often it has been the democracy of expediency; the weapon of the "outs" against the "ins." Democratic goals will not be achieved incidentally, as by-products of some separate revolutionary policy. It is the very pursuit of democracy which is genuinely revolutionary. This essay has sketchily presented, then, some observations which embody democracy as the decisive criterion.

TRADE UNIONS IN THE INTEGRAL STATE

by Travers Clement

Throughout a world at war, in the democracies as well as in the totalitarian states, there is no such thing today as a free labor movement in the sense in which we understood that phrase only a few years ago. To say this is not to place the British and American labor movements in the same category with those of Germany, Italy—and Russia. Both here and in Britain, labor is still *organizationally* independent of the state apparatus and like other social groups it can still exert moral pressures and make verbal protests. But the difference becomes increasingly quantitative rather than qualitative as total war accelerates the development of an all-embracing statism and the political integration of labor into the state apparatus.

Today American labor finds itself deprived of practically every economic weapon, including the basic right to strike, by which it has maintained and extended its strength through decades of struggle. (Those democratic optimists who point to the existence of a strong labor movement as evidence that democracy has lost nothing to total war, overlook the fact that labor's *acquiescence* in the decrees and pressures that have robbed it of its economic weapons—both here and in Britain—has deprived us of a working gauge of its present freedom.) With political power fast becoming the nexus of all social control, American labor finds itself forced into an arena where it is least prepared for struggle; in fact, where it has no independent organizational power whatever—the arena of national politics. For labor's political position today bears little resemblance to the hard-boiled political trading and business-politics (so much support today for so much service rendered yesterday) long practised under Samuel Gompers. It has become one of the two mass bases—the other is the Solid South—of a political machine to which first, the long economic crisis, then the war program have given almost summary powers over the whole economy.

Labor's war-time economic position, though potentially dangerous, would not be too serious if this were 1917 and a recurrence of the old War Labor Board honeymoon, and were it not for the general politico-economic context in which it occurs. But nothing is more obvious than the fact that the developing economic revolution (of which this war is a crisis, a military phase) will not end with the armistice; that the crisis conditions of this revolution will, if anything, be intensified during the period of what is euphemistically called "post-war readjustment" and that the social controls instituted now will not be relaxed,

though they may change somewhat in form. Labor's freedom of action, its psychological as well as its economic preparedness for leadership in the post-war crisis can determine in large measure the political pattern of the post-war collectivist development. Herein lies the seriousness of its present position, its utilization as balance or counterweight to too great business and industrial pressure in the effort of the administration to maintain a political equilibrium.

Union Tasks

To the revolutionary and the radical progressive who has looked to the labor movement not merely as the main bulwark against fascism but also as the vanguard of the whole democratic struggle, the main potential base of a functional democracy, the present situation raises new problems, including the problem of his own role within the labor movement. That role was once comparatively simple—though not so simple as that of the Communist to whom the labor movement is primarily raw material for political manipulation in the interests of the Kremlin. There was first the job of strengthening the position of the labor union in its day-to-day class struggles — being a good trade unionist; the job of “bearing witness” to a social ideal, of individual agitation, persuasion, education toward a wider social perspective and socialistic goal; the drawing of social conclusions from immediate economic experiences; the fight for internal democracy and honest unionism—including the right of union members with a common perspective to associate themselves in groups or caucuses for the furtherance of that perspective; the agitation and struggle within the labor movement for labor's political independence, its consciousness of its own political role as the bearer of a new social-revolutionary impetus in human society. None of these functions has been negated by labor's present situation but they have been enormously complicated and made overwhelmingly urgent by one over-all political task—the checking of labor's integration (under the guise of “partnership”) into the emerging bureaucratic state and the re-liberation of those dynamic social forces inherent in its class struggle, its preparation (together with its natural social allies) for its functional and political responsibility in winning, building and administering a cooperative democracy.

It is one of the unfortunate ironies of our present situation that the very totalitarian developments of the past ten years which have made this task so urgent have led to a reaction against “politics” (in ideological as well as the narrow “practical” sense), to an idealization of the trade union movement, as such, even among many labor radicals. This fear of ideological issues and of those who seek to raise them within the labor movement, together with a simple faith in labor's “instinctive” economic wisdom, is a reaction which plays directly into the hands of totalitarians. The class struggle itself brings labor into conflict with economic privilege and social reaction and the very

terms of that struggle (immediately limited in perspective though it may be) gives to the labor movement its socially progressive direction. But as the developments of the past few years have indicated it does not furnish it with any "instinctive" understanding of the social forces which may today be operating behind and through a liberalistic, "pro-labor" set-up or equip it to cope—at least in time—with the dangers involved in its own integration into such a set-up. In fact, it has been labor's most "progressive," rather than its reactionary leadership, that has been most signally blind to political reality and which has led the way toward that integration.

Swing from Politics

The reaction against what is believed to be the inherent evil of "political" leadership and the political role of radicals within the labor movement has also colored the perspective of many who see the necessity of independent labor politics, but who believe that labor politics can maintain its purity and avoid the pitfalls of bureaucracy only to the extent that it remains under the direct control of the unions, manned by their representatives—a perspective identical with that of Ernest Bevin and the labor bureaucracy which controls both the British trade unions and the British Labor Party and which is dominated by a fierce antagonism to the Party's more leftward "intellectuals"—particularly socialist intellectuals. Here too is a failure to recognize that there is no such thing as a fool-proof organization, whether political or economic; that the guarantees of democracy, in any type of organization, lie partly in its mechanical structure and procedure but primarily in the character, awareness, determination and the political level of its membership. German Social Democracy became a cautious, opportunistic and bureaucratic apparatus as its control passed out of the hands of an earlier, more idealistic, political leadership and membership into the hands of the solid, "practical" trade union leaders and a membership concerned argely with serving its own *immediate* trade union ends. Labor needs to beware, God knows, of the political adventurer in its midst, but without a leaven of highly political idealists concerned *primarily* with ultimate ends, even at the sacrifice of immediate advantage, it becomes bogged down in its own practicality. For there is no question but that at times a conflict exists between labor's short-range and long-range advantage. The policy of choosing "the lesser evil" flows largely from this conflict. Masses of people tend naturally to decide in terms of immediate advantage. It is the role of the social radical in the labor movement to think and work in long-range terms, to integrate labor's immediate activity and decisions with its ultimate social perspective.

The reaction against "outside interference," especially political interference in the labor movement, springs largely, of course, from Communist manipulations and has tended to revive among labor radi-

cals the old social-democratic concept of strict neutrality in labor's internal affairs, the tendency to "go along" with labor even when it stumbles up a blind alley. But the social radical who has faith in the integrity of his own beliefs can no more be neutral on significant divisions inside the labor movement than on those outside it. Because the Communist Party has perverted and abused the role of a political vanguard does not mean that that role must be forever abdicated by organized Socialists and democratic radicals in general. Ideological conflicts of various radical tendencies within the labor movement, if pursued on an open, decent and democratic discussion level cannot harm the American labor movement—as it never harmed the European labor movement—but on the contrary will help to clarify its thinking, to overcome its political immaturity.

A politically mature labor movement—whatever other mistakes it might have made—would never have been so completely taken into camp by the liberal politicians (long before the war crisis) with so little guarantee and compensation for the future as has American labor. For this labor movement today is not even (like British labor) a junior partner in a coalition government, a coalition which it has the organizational power to smash should it care to do so. Rather it has become the partyless political pensioner of an individual politician, who, however sincere his friendship for labor or his personal democratic faith may be, is representative in this period of an objective social current of the utmost danger to a free labor movement. A mature and independent labor movement could have utilized the more liberalistic, reformist tendencies of the Roosevelt Administration to its own and the country's political advantage (as it once utilized the NRA to its organizational advantage). With the war-time translation of those tendencies into bureaucratic statist channels that time is past.

However blind its leadership may be to the dangers ahead, there are some indications — however unreasoned and tentative — that the rank and file, especially in the newer unions, are less seduced by the new prospect of state-labor-industry integration than its political loyalties have indicated. It is here that the labor radical and progressive with a social analysis and perspective will find their opportunity and must function in the period ahead.

ENQUIRY needs more than anything else your intellectual contributions: Articles, notes, comments, criticisms, letters, suggestions, etc. **ENQUIRY** succeeds only to the degree that such response is elicited. Send all mail to Box 257, 207 East 84th St., New York, N. Y.

A LETTER AND A REPLY

To the Editor of ENQUIRY:

I have read the first issue of ENQUIRY with considerable interest and, although there is much disagreement on many points, I welcome this magazine as an expression of independent thought, trying to break the chorus of regimented thinking which has of late been dominant among our "totalitarian liberal" magazines.

Gertrude Jaeger's effort* to apply the criteria of scientific method to the field of political action has struck me particularly, and I just want to indicate some reasons why I have the impression that this effort can only arrive at an impasse.

It has always been the ambition of scientists to claim that what they are searching for is objective reality, the pure fact, undisturbed by any outside interference. This claim was particularly strengthened by the physical discoveries of the last century. Physicists were convinced then that they had laid bare the "laws of nature"; for them, it was only a matter of time before science would be able to present the beautiful harmony of the universe, all well organized in laws and mathematical relations. Since then, however, even in physics, the development has been to inspire those positivistic dreamers with a considerable degree of humility. The contention of Marxists—that, to a certain degree, reality, the objective world, is itself shifting together with the means by which men view it, that there is no such thing as objective and eternal truth—has been realized by physicists themselves. Modern physics (especially Heisenberg, but also Bohr, Broglie and others) has come to the conclusion that it is impossible to state objective laws without taking into consideration the act of the observer. Even in physics, then, the action of the experimenter disturbs already existing relations, producing a unity between the scientist and the material on which he operates. Objective science, in the sense that it is possible to obtain an objective and completely adequate representation of reality, is inconceivable, because the interference of the experimenter can never be excluded.

In social science it is still less possible to state whether a judgment is true or false in the abstract. We judge social events from a specific social locus, even if we make every conceivable effort to be objective. I cannot see how beings involved in the patterns of social life can possibly acquire an objectivity fitted only for beings living on another planet. Every social action has a specific function, fitting into the social pattern, and it is impossible to discuss the relevance of any assertion without taking this function into consideration. Not even in physics, much less in sociology or politics, is it permitted to isolate a

statement from the position of the observer. Moreover, let no one think that the effort to be "objective," unmoved by social events, has itself no social function. To use a rather vulgar comparison: if a man observes a fight between a gangster and his victims and merely objectively records this event, he is not at all neutral, his position is a very definite one, it is an attitude which fits into a whole pattern of action. In social life, all action, conscious or not, inevitably becomes partisan. This is especially true in times like ours, where the future of a whole civilization is at stake. The attitude of the "pure" scientist, the attitude of men preoccupied only with analyzing "facts," inevitably becomes reactionary. I agree that in a time where truth is consciously veiled by those whose interests command them to obscure the realities which dominate the social scene, there is a certain utility in piercing the veil of these ideologies. But this "debunking," *as such*, is not creative and may often be reactionary. An attempt to merely establish facts must lead to a subservience to these facts. Such an attitude will at the best lead to the hopeless pyrrhonism of a Montaigne. This cynical thinking takes place in epochs of social decay. On the other hand, in periods in which are embedded possibilities of social action, thought has always transcended the statement of facts; it has become clear then that the only realization of thought is in action. Positivism and pyrrhonism fit well into the social pattern of recation and despair. They are the impotent expression of impotent epochs. On the contrary, at the dawn of social changes, whenever the old society was cracking, it has been the aim of the thinker not only to interpret reality but to change it. The nobility and the morality of science, as I see it, is not the impotent, searching for abstract truth, forever hidden and unattainable; it is the onrushing activity of the spirit of man to conquer the world and to dominate the "facts"—be they of natural or of their own making. Only in social action can truth be realized, only in social action can the true morality be attained.

André Gide once told the story of the hundred-pat who, when asked how he managed to use all his pats at the same time, was from this minute on incapable of moving his feet at all. A profound insight is conveyed in this simple picture. An abstract weighing of all facts, one against the other, can only lead to complete impotence in action. This can only serve falsehood and not truth, because it serves to preserve the existing unjust and inhuman society. The abstract search for "truth," is thus of service not to truth but to the falsehood of the inhuman society in which we are living. Men have built a society which fundamentally alienates them from their true essence, suppresses all spontaneity, makes them mechanical tools of a machine of their own making. Gathering facts about this state does not abolish this unhuman condition. The true condition of men can only be realized by opposition to the facts of existing society and this opposition can only be realized in consciously directed social action. An analysis, aimed at

* Science: Method and Morality; ENQUIRY, November, 1942.

discovering of the "real thing" hidden under a veil of falsehoods by interest-bound ideologies, thus turns against itself. In this sense I think that even Hegel's idealistic philosophy, aiming at transcending the "reality of facts," is a hundred times more revolutionary and progressive than the positivistic adoration of facts prevalent in American thinking. Let no one be fooled by the anti-idealistic aspect of this philosophy and mistake it for a progressive tendency. It is, on the contrary, the philosophy of those who are satisfied with the facts, and thus conservative. Revolutionary thought, directed at transcending and overthrowing the given order of things, is in itself an important fact. Action and the will to action change the pattern of pre-established reality. Only in this revolutionary action, bound to the interests of those who represent the oppressed, the under-privileged of this society, can thought be really potent, really able to acquire a true significance. In this opposition in action to the reality of today is to be found the only morality of our times. Truth is partisan; partisan in the interest of the underprivileged of this society, in the interest of those who want to blast the whole structure of this inhuman society in order that man may finally be able to realize his full potentialities and acquire his true measure.

This is in a very succinct form my objection to your general attitude toward political action. I should be very glad if these few lines would stimulate a discussion on this subject in your pages.
New York City—Nov. 30, 1942

LOUIS CLAIR.

Dear Mr. Clair,

I am somewhat at a loss to answer your criticisms. In the first place, I must disclaim almost *in toto* the conception of science you seem to believe I hold; in the second place, our disagreements on what constitutes the method of science are so great that I don't know where to begin. I am sorry you built a straw man, partly because I have to use some of my space to tear him down, and partly because, if my politics are to be labeled conservative or revolutionary, I'd rather they be labeled on the basis of what I actually believe.

I must confess that I find it difficult to believe that my article could have been interpreted as presenting the notion that the method of science is limited to the description of matters of fact. I was under the impression that the burden of it was the attempt to analyse how the method of science can function in the process of *changing* existing conditions. I said explicitly: The sciences viewed simply as bodies of facts or conclusions are ethically neutral. I thought I made it abundantly clear that I did not view the sciences as simply or merely bodies of facts or conclusions. And now you base your political characterization of my article on the assertion that I am for the method of science as a process of "merely establishing facts," as a preoccupation with facts.

But the point of your argument is that "merely establishing facts"—as you describe the activity of the pure scientist—is reactionary. Although I do not believe that the function of the method of science in politics is limited to a description of facts, I must hasten to the defense of the pure scientist. Your view leads either to absurdity or to a kind of totalitarianism. It makes of Benjamin Franklin a partisan of electric storms; of the criminologist who merely gathers data a partisan of crime. If we are interested in democracy, we have got to decide that the pursuit of pure science, physical or social, does not automatically commit the scientist to a political stand. The opposite view seems to require a political struggle against pure science on the ground that its disinterestedness is objectively a defense of the *status quo*, although pure science would, apparently, be safe under socialism, since it would then be describing a progressive *status quo*.

You appear to hold to a theory of class truth: that statements about fact vary with the class status of the observer, at the same time that revolutionary thought is in some sense "truer" than other kinds. The belief that there is no common and cooperative test for truth has, however, strange consequences. When beliefs are viewed as a function of class, and criteria of validity denied, differences in beliefs point to differences in class interests. Marxists do at times explain differences in belief this way: the recent split in the Trotskyites was, according to the Cannonites, a split between the proletarian faction and the petty bourgeois. However, it is interesting to note that they do not always employ this explanation; it is an impossible position to maintain consistently, for it would lead to the interpretation of every inner-party difference as a class struggle.

Moreover, so long as it is denied that the test for truth lies in some common, cooperative method, the decision as to what is true must ultimately depend on the authority of individual revolutionists. In terms of socialist politics, this means that the "real" revolutionists, that is, those actually holding political power—are in an admirable position to legislate truth. They deny the existence of any objective, common test of truth, at the same time that they claim to possess that brand of truth incidental to their class position and their role as the liberators of mankind. Theoretically, at least, their policies are in an impregnable position: they cannot be disproved and they do not have to be proved.

I cannot take up the provocative problems in epistemology which you raise. Quite apart from my interpretation of objectivity and of the developments in physics, I might point out that the meaning of "position" is altered in the process of carrying it over from physics to the social field, for in the former it means position in space and in the latter social position. As a consequence any conclusions about the role of position in physics have no implications for social science.

GERTRUDE JAEGER.

Up for Comment...

In Great Britain the Independent Labor Party carries on the struggle for "Socialism Now." A practical measure of its strength may be seen in its showing in a rather important by-election held a while back, in which Fenner Brockway, one of the leaders of the I L P, carried twenty-five percent of the total ballot. This in war time on an anti-war program. The I L P position on the war as expressed by Brockway in the July 1940 issue of *Left* is as follows: "... the duty of British Socialists is clear. It is to carry on the struggle for workers' power and socialism in Britain, to throw full weight into the development of workshop organization and influence; to strengthen the independence and authority of the trades councils and the loyalty of the workers towards them; to popularize the demand for social equality and the ending of the power and privilege of the possessing class and of the ownership from which it comes; to demand liberty for the colonial peoples; to popularize the principles of a socialist peace, and to use power when attained to stimulate a responsive social revolution in Europe which alone can make that peace realizable."

As in all sections of the left, there seems to be a lack of awareness of the central problem of dictatorial growth. The general perversion of idealistic struggle, largely through the unchecked development of bureaucratic structures, is surely a matter requiring serious consideration. Yet, in a rather thorough reading of the ILP press, little could be found taking up this problem in any basic way. One article, by C. A. Smith—until recently editor of *Left* — is entitled "The New Leviathan." Accepting the form of the future socialist state as totalitarian, Smith proposes limiting this totalitarianism to the economic structure. Whatever one may think of this view, it does stand as an exception to the general silence which prevails on this score. Smith does pose the problem and is at least aware that "... in these days the forces making for the destruction of liberty are stronger than those making for its preservation."

The mere recognition of this problem is itself important. A leadership that does not think consciously in these terms cannot possibly prevent bureaucratic degeneration.

In general there seems to be little discussion of methods of party building, that is, building along democratic lines. It is crucial for the future society to defeat the tendency towards party centralization and bureaucratization. The informal structures of the party, the habits and attitudes of the membership, and the extent to which they are willing to put democracy first, all will add up to the manner in which they will conduct themselves given positions of power in society.

it might not have fallen so readily into its defensist position on Russia. Considering what has developed out of the Russian revolution,

Had the ILP considered these problems carefully and consistently from the viewpoint of democratic governmental structure and the equitable distribution of wealth, it is at least hard to see that the soviet nationalized economy has any intrinsic merit. Moreover, this means in practice that the *New Leader* (official organ of the ILP) can pass off so weird a remark as "(there is) a necessity of recognizing the statesmanship of Stalin in the sphere of internal affairs." (!) It is interesting to note here that many minority resolutions at the recently held fiftieth annual convention, calling for aid to Russia in more concrete forms than those already agreed to, were defeated. They were voted down on the ground that the mechanisms for aid which these resolutions embodied could not be carried out. This in spite of the fact that they were all logical extensions of the program of aid already adopted. Carrying out these resolutions would have meant practical identification with the Stalinists, which the ILP certainly cannot be accused of.

Except for Bob Edwards and Fenner Brockway, again in *Left*, there seems to be insufficient effort being made to deal with problems on a more analytical basis than restriction to slogans will allow. To call for "Socialism Now" requires answers to, for example, the question of the specific role of the shop steward movement, and its function in "workers' power," both from the democratic angle and the revolutionary. The problem of building a military arm controlled by labor is also vitally important. In general, the slogan "Socialism Now" is peculiarly devoid of the concretization one might expect of such a call to immediate action.

BERT EDWARDS.

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We print the following section from M. M. Knappen's "Tudor Puritanism" (U. of Chi. Press, pp. 179-180). We might clumsily label it as "the policy of the lesser evil in the 16th Century"; it would be even more heavy-handed to point out its parallel in our day. So for what it's worth:

The appointive power of the Queen (Elizabeth) brought matters to an issue. When a bishopric or other important office was to be filled, she made conditions which sorely tried the consciences of all who had the interests of the Reformed Church at heart. She demanded that ancient landed endowments be surrendered to the crown in exchange for less valuable tithes and inappropriate rectories. The prominence of the places also implied the obligation to wear the official costume and enforce its use upon subordinates. Against this royal atti-

tude the reformers of all stripes protested vigorously. But when their protests were almost if not completely ignored, there rose the question of the next step. Should the Queen be subjected to a general boycott, with most of the advanced Protestants refusing to accept her appointments except under compulsion? Or should they register their protest and then take the offices lest the church suffer the even worse fate of having them filled by more objectionable types, such as the Catholic or the indifferent? It was a difficult decision of the sort which has troubled the idealistic leaders in all ages, and the argument was heated. Good taste and political considerations necessitated its being kept under cover, but enough traces have survived to indicate its importance.

It divided the returning Puritan group and cost the party many of the remaining leaders, who decided, after consultation, "not to desert our churches for the sake of a few ceremonies, and those not unlawful in themselves, especially since the pure doctrine of the gospel remained in all its integrity and freedom." Not only Parker and Cox took office in the new government but Sandys, Grindal, Jewel, and even Parkhurst did the same. Once installed, they tended to lose their Puritan attitude, though occasionally they might dispute with their more conservative colleagues about such things as the Queen's Cross or be charged with having too "Germanical" (advanced Protestant) opinions. The responsibilities of office tended to make them conservative. As administrators they felt constrained to enforce regulations with which originally they had no sympathy. Continued opposition in time exasperated them to the point of denouncing their former friends and becoming less reluctant supporters of the royal policy. Like her father in the early days of (Thomas) Cromwell's influence, Elizabeth thus managed to sap the strength of the Protestant opposition by the simple process of exercising her appointive power.

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The presence of Czarist Russia as an ally presented a political problem to the democratic propagandists of the last war. In this war it is Stalin's Russia which presents that political problem, more intensely and more widely ramified. This is a note on one aspect of that problem; Russia's role in the post-war world and at the peace conference which will usher it in.

Certainly the Communist Party and its various hacks were overjoyed at the turn in events which made it possible for them to revert to form as Twentieth Century Americans. But it was no such easy matter for certain liberals to dust off their anti-totalitarian, anti-Stalin records; what is expedient is not necessarily comfortable. For the lesser men Ex-Ambassador to Russia, William E. Davies sounded a satisfactory keynote: there is no need to fear "Bolshevik" Russia,

for she is becoming more and more like our own capitalist America. And in the scramble to manufacture the new myth, there is pointed out the kindred quality of the gaudy Soviet nationalism, the adoration of mechanical efficiency, the swaggering sense of bigness, the shrewd and ruthless "realism."

Argument is of little avail against most of these new Russian enthusiasts; opportunism is, in a certain "practical" sense, more logical than any argument predicated on ideals. But there are other, more worthwhile men, who really measure the war with the criteria of progressive social goals. It is for these men that we should like to emphasize this recent item.

In the New York Times of November 5, we learn of Russia's official intention to make Germany and her supporters pay for all material damages, including the costs of evacuating occupied territory, and for "... all loss of religious property(!)" To carry out the assessment of costs Russia has appointed a commission including many big-guns of the Stalinist intellectuals.

National War Guilt

The concept involved is, of course, one of *national* war guilt. The notion is not new; all of the Soviet's war propaganda has been thus directed at the Hun. But the demand for reparations, so closely linked with infamous Versailles, strikes a new high in crassness — even for the Societ! It is not that the Stalinists do not understand the systematic nature of the cause of the war. This bold proposal is better explained as part of a calculating approach to problems of post-war Europe. One might say, Pan-Slavism, with a managerial twist!

Even in the framework of a rational system (not ours) which selects policy during war in accordance with the end of the least evil set of rulers, it may not be so easy to take a stand. A sensitive man already may experience a sense of nausea at the picture of Europe's careerist-scoundrels flocking to the banner of a victorious U. S. S. R.

M. E.

It was our intention to issue ENQUIRY as a monthly; lack of material and time prevent that. We can promise, however, its appearance at least bi-monthly — and more often when possible. Subscriptions (\$1.00) will be for twelve issues rather than for the calendar year.

A CHRISTIAN EXPERIMENT*

To Thomas Mann's dictum: "In our time the destiny of man presents its meaning in political terms," we may add the observation, drawn from current intellectual trends, that our political destiny is on the way to being formulated in religious terms. Which may be a more or less natural reversion. It is a comparatively recent phenomenon, perhaps peculiar to our modern Western civilization, that masses of men should work, think, and agitate for a reconstruction of society according to some ideal of social perfection. It belongs to the order of religion rather than politics, as this latter was previously understood. It finds its parallel in extremist religious movements such as the Anabaptists in Luther's Germany and the Levellers in Cromwell's England. With the estrangement of religion from crucial social activities, political ethics becomes secular in origin and intent. The revolutionists are driven by the recognition that actual society is an embodiment of force and fraud, organized for no ideal end. As remedy after remedy fails, the deeper grows the dissatisfaction. When disillusionment becomes complete, all that is most vital in the moral life of the time alienates itself from the political life of society and from the service of the state as something unworthy and unclean. Piecemeal reconstruction is deemed hopeless, and men return to the more enduring vision of universal pervasive principles which absorb all problems and solutions into a single expanded perspective.

If this general analysis were to be applied point by point to Mr. Silone, it would be found to be accurate and even indispensable to understanding, but insufficient. For we are not dealing with a man who bends to a pattern but with one of singular gifts, the outstanding of which is integrity. Integrity signifies an honest, thorough, and capable analysis of one's own views, a prerequisite for which is a sufficient sum of intellectual distinction; so that it would be presumptuous to dismiss his theories as a mere reflection. Rather are they positive contributions to policy, to be distilled and evaluated. And of course,

there is the novel *qua* novel.

The Seed Beneath the Snow completes the intellectual evolution of Pietro Spina from revolutionary Marxian politics to a libertarian revolutionary Christianity, begun in *Bread and Wine*. There is little narrative since the novel is demonstrative in purpose, contrasting Spina's way of life with that of the others, elaborating the doctrinal meanings in innumerable dialogues, and with a few simple images proposing the salient ideas. The philosophy is not new and was stated succinctly by Thoreau when he said: "Action from principle, the perception and performance of right, changes things and relations; it is essentially revolutionary, and does not consist wholly with anything which was." Action is to be based solely on principles, without adaptation or compromise. The basic principles are the maxim "Do unto others as you would have them do to you," the regenerative power of love, humility, sacrifice of worldly vanities, and a devotion to the poor and oppressed. The central symbol is taken to be Christ's sacrifice, an act of "madness," seditious to law and order. The portrayal of Spina in this latest novel is supposed to indicate what such a life would look like in practice.

As a novel it is a poor performance, and since a substantial amount of his previous stylistic vigor is present, the dominating orientation seems to be to blame. A passionate approach to ethical behavior lacking a set of rigid categories (such as Dostoyevsky often possessed) is diffused into romantic sentiment. Much of what Spina says and does is, by the universal canons of experience, downright silly, i.e., reveals an incongruity of cause and effect, an irrelevancy in act and feeling. In a "naturalistic" portrait this defect is fatal. His relations with the deaf-mute Infante possess all the sentimentality of Steinbeck's *Mice and Men* without the dramatic force; the same is even more true of the ending. Silone's desire to pierce the hard shell which separates men is to be appreciated. But in actual life the "inner man" always turns out to have a shell of his own. When trans-

parent purity is attained, as is the case with Spina, genuine human personality is extinguished. The failure of the image of Spina, the saint, may be contrasted with the convincing and impressive presentation of Don Severino, the saint "manqué," the latter being a more universal, poignant, and significant condition.

There is, too, a vitiating "anti-theoretical" bias, revealed plainly in the repeated scorn of political rhetoric as a technique of obfuscation. The goods of life, especially love between all living creatures, are seen as immediately present in existence, yearning to be grasped in action. Discourse and dialectic are idle, and only emotional affirmatives are justified. Contrasting this Silone with the earlier Malraux is suggestive. In Silone, confusion commences in the concrete, in Malraux, in the abstract. Silone insists that love and sacrifice are only fruitful if applied to living creatures and denied to symbols and programs, which, because of their abstract nature, have a somewhat Satanic power. Malraux's characters are driven into a fury of action by the overriding power of some symbolic view of man's fate. While Malraux's characters can never develop because of the bounds within which they were conceived, Silone's cannot be created but reside somewhere within the supposed intrinsic gravitational force of his superb intentions.

The fundamental flaw is an excess of pride, a confidence in one's own revolutionary innocence. Silone would have us "build on a new foundation, start with simple hay and clear water and then feel our way forward." But it is not so easy; there are few in our time who have sufficient naivete of spirit to play innocent. We are born with a heritage, a long task assigned, a character imposed. It is when life is understood to be a process of redemp-

tion that its various phases are taken up in turn, without undue haste. The image of Pietro Spina fails because such a vision cannot be conceived willfully and hurriedly, no matter how provocative the stimulus. There is no simple formula that can be employed in the contravention of corruption and "provisional living"; the adaptation to the nausea of daily life, sustained by some vague anticipation, is not merely a mistaken notion which can be dissipated by adherence to principles. Proud, too, is the blinding illumination of the Good. In this novel of intense moral feeling we do not find what we would most expect — an acute awareness of subsistent evil. The characters and images are either representations of the Good or background for such representations. Even Dona Faustina, at first a seemingly careless woman, concludes with a radiance of virginal purity.

Towards the end of the novel there is a dialogue between Faustina and Spina:

"These are the rules, Pietro; we must have patience; we didn't invent the game, but we must play it, as hounds or hares, one or the other."

"And what if a man should refuse to be either a hound or a hare, Faustina?"

"Then he is no part of civilized society and he must run away; in short he must be a hare."

Mr. Silone is attempting an experiment in a Christian morality which avoid these disjunctives. The experiment will fail. In the meantime we must wait upon the course of events, till hares become hounds, and integrity may assume its rightful political forms.

WILLIAM FERRY.

* The Seed Beneath the Snow, by Ignazio Silone. Harper and Brothers. \$3.

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